FIVE BUCharests in a Decade: Fashioning Romanian Urban Cultures, 1939-1949 (FIVEBUC)

A Brief Overview

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FIVE BUCharests in a Decade: Fashioning Romanian Urban Cultures, 1939-1949 (FIVEBUC) is an original, comprehensive, comparative investigation into the development and crisis of Bucharest's identity over a decade as represented in fashion. It is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Seal of Excellence @Unipi (MSCA SoE@Unipi) research project proposal with Università di Pisa , supervised by Prof. Vincenzo Mele.

Bucarest. Willy Pragher, City of Contrasts (1942)

This post is a duplicate (don't ask why!) from Maison de Myth, my main Substack blog. Please consider subscribing to the FIVEBUC blog if you wish to receive updates about my project-specific activities, writings, musings.

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FIVEBUC redefines the landscape of historical and sociological research by employing an interdisciplinary methodology to examine five distinct periods of Romanian history simultaneously and comparatively. It adopts a novel approach by exploring Romania's development from 1939 to 1949, focusing on the five different eras of Bucharest through fashion. It emphasises the influence of European social, cultural, and identity frameworks during this era. The project investigates how fashion reflected the prevailing Zeitgeist and how the evolving concepts of Bucharest's identity became closely intertwined with Western influences.

The timespan covers five successive Bucharests over one decade, around and during the Second World War, across extreme ideologies. The 5 Bucharests are:

1. The last year of the interwar era, marked by significant shifts in Romania under King Carol II's right-wing royal dictatorship. During this tumultuous time, the country experienced increasing austerity and severe censorship, restricting freedoms and stifling dissent. As the world braced for conflict, the shadow of World War II began to loom larger, with its onset reshaping political landscapes and igniting tensions across Europe. Between 1939 and 1940, these events paved the way for the unprecedented turmoil that would follow in the years of war ahead. This Bucharest can be traced shortly before and within the first year of the Second World War.

2. The Second Bucharest emerged as an extreme-right-wing militant autocracy. A significant event in this period was the establishment of the National Legionnaire State, which marked a shift in Romania's political landscape. Romania officially aligned itself with the Axis powers, which resulted in a significant rise in racist, eugenic and antisemitic violence and the country's participation in the Holocaust. This turbulent period lasted from 1940 to 1941, coinciding with the early years of the Second World War.

3. The Third Bucharest encompasses Romania under the right-wing military dictatorship of Ion Antonescu. This regime continued Romania's involvement in the Holocaust, contributing to the tragic events and atrocities of the time. Romania played a significant role on the Eastern Front alongside the Axis powers, further entrenching its military presence in this critical conflict. This Bucharest occurred from 1941 to 1944, encompassing much of the later years of the Second World War.

4. During the Fourth Bucharest, Romania experienced a significant shift in its political landscape, marked by the transition from the Axis powers to the Allies. This change was catalysed by King Michael's coup, which played a crucial role in Romania officially joining the Allied forces. As the conflict progressed, Soviet involvement in the region increased significantly. In the post-war period, a dramatic turn occurred as the Soviet Union solidified its influence. This led to the forced abdication of King Michael and the subsequent takeover of Romania by Soviet-backed forces. This Bucharest occurred during the pivotal years between 1944 and 1947, during the last years and shortly after the end of the Second World War.

5. The Fifth Bucharest period unfolded during the initial years of the Communist dictatorship in Romania. Among the critical events that shaped the nation's future was the controversial election process, which set the stage for significant political change. The Popular

Republic of Romania was officially born during this time, reflecting the broader shifts across Eastern Europe. This era saw the implementation of Stalinisation in Romania, as the government worked to align itself more closely with Soviet policies. This traumatic and transformative Bucharest period occurred between 1947 and 1949, shortly after the end of the Second World War, as the decade neared its conclusion.

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